

Book Reviews

Sommerschuh, Christine, *Einführung in die tibetische Schriftsprache: Lehrbuch für den Unterricht und das vertiefende Selbststudium* (Nordstedt: Books on Demand GmbH, 2008), xvi + 396 pp., € 44.00, ISBN 978 3 837 012149.

Indologists count on a steady stream of monographs with exciting titles such as *Untersuchung der Partikel iva* (Schrapel 1970) or *Das Intensivum im Vedischen* (Schaefer 1994). For Tibetan similar studies do not exist. A lack of research into Tibetan grammar does not, however, excuse Tibetologists from the need to teach first year students. Consequently, despite the paucity of studies in Tibetan grammar, and the complete lack of pedagogical material beyond the first year, an array of first year Tibetan textbooks does exist; the work under review is the newest addition to this genre.

The lack of more specialized works leaves Tibetan textbooks torn between serving pedagogical purposes and providing grammatical comprehensiveness. Although this tension persists in Sommerschuh's volume, one sees signs of improvement. In particular, Sommerschuh refers to Peter Schwieger's recent *Handbuch zur Grammatik der klassischen tibetischen Schriftsprache* (2006) to avoid delving into all of the nooks and crannies of Tibetan grammar. It is convenient to consider separately the merits of Sommerschuh's work as a textbook for classroom use and its merits as an accurate description of Tibetan grammar.

Merits as a Textbook

Sommerschuh writes with a clear and precise style which neither befuddles the neophyte nor talks down to the old hand. A good example is the description of articulatory phonetics, which opens the work (pp. 7–11).

The decision to structure the work from minimal units up (letters, syllables, words, affixes, sentences) is excellent. Generations of students have been confounded by the treatment of finite verb affixes before noun declension or even an overview of the verbal system in Hahn (1994) and Hodge (1990). Nonetheless, Sommerschuh's work is not without some

questionable organizational decisions of its own. The converbial uses of each case marker are discussed directly after the case marker is introduced (pp. 98, 146, 150, 155). Other converbs such as *-cin* or *-ste* are discussed in a separate section (pp. 215–223). The student receives no clear overview of the entire converbial system with this presentation, but rather is introduced to it piecemeal throughout the work. In the extreme case the converbial use of the genitive is introduced long before the student learns anything about the verbal system (p. 98). The order of constituents of the nominal phrase are discussed (p. 30) before the parts of speech, including nouns, are introduced (p. 49). Although Sommerschuh correctly distinguishes the allative (*-la*), locative (*-na*), and terminative (*-tu*, *-du*, *-su*, *-r*) as three distinct cases, she undoes much of the advantage won thereby in treating the use of all three cases together (pp. 151–160).

Sommerschuh chooses readings and exercises which are more interesting and more appropriate in terms of difficulty than any of her predecessors. In addition, the inclusion of dictionary definitions from the *Bod Rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Zhang 1985) is a particularly good idea. These short and clear passages are not only of appropriate difficulty level for first year students, but also familiarize them with this essential research tool.

Students of Greek, Latin, and Classical Chinese are provided, even at the advanced level, with texts that include word breaks, sentence breaks, question and quotation marks, and the demarcation of proper nouns. The beginning Tibetan student struggles enormously to identify such elements. Noting such things explicitly would allow students to get used to reading Tibetan, and acquire sufficient practice to transition smoothly to not requiring these aids in the future. The inclusion of such information is also a component of intellectual honesty. To correctly comprehend a Tibetan text one must identify word and sentence breaks and quotations. If an editor includes such information he exhibits his understanding of a text in a more explicit and rigorous way than a translation can.

In scholarly articles, some authors do capitalize proper names and introduce word breaks by contrasting blank space with hyphens in transliterations of Tibetan. Sommerschuh has rightly decided to avoid transliteration in her textbook in favour of the Tibetan script. Using the original script is however no obstacle to including such information, as I demonstrate with the following passage, which opens the reading from lesson 18 (p. 163). I take a cue from the editing of Classical Chinese texts as to how to represent quotations and proper names. In addition, I mark word breaks with two *tsheg* and the absolutive with a small circle.

ངས་ཀྱང་ལྟོ་བྲག་གི་མདའ་ནས་མི་སྤང་ཚད་ལ། ། གླུ་མཚོག་མར་པ་ལོ་རྩུ་ ། རྒྱུ་འདྲི་ཞིང་
 ཕྱིན་པས། ། རྒྱུ་མི་ཡོད་། ། ཟེར་བ་གཅིག་ཀྱང་མ་བྱུང་བ་ལ། ། གྲོ་བོ་ལུང་ ། མཐོང་བ་འི་ལ་ཁར་སྤྲེལ་པ་འི་ཆེ་མི་
 གཅིག་ཀྱང་བལ་སྤར་ ། ལྷར་བྲིས་པས་ ། ། མར་པ་ ། ཟེར་བ་ནི་ཡོད་། ། གླུ་མཚོག་མར་པ་ལོ་རྩུ་ ། ཟེར་བ་ནི་མེད་
 ། ། ཟེར་།

། འོ་ན་ ། གྲོ་བོ་ལུང་ ། རྒྱུ་མི་ཡོད་། ། ཟེར་བ་གཅིག་ཀྱང་མ་བྱུང་བ་ལ། ། གྲོ་བོ་ལུང་ ། མཐོང་བ་འི་ལ་ཁར་སྤྲེལ་པ་འི་ཆེ་མི་
 གཅིག་ཀྱང་བལ་སྤར་ ། ལྷར་བྲིས་པས་ ། ། མར་པ་ ། ཟེར་བ་ནི་ཡོད་། ། གླུ་མཚོག་མར་པ་ལོ་རྩུ་ ། ཟེར་བ་ནི་མེད་
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Although the specific conventions employed are of little significance, I do hope that the authors of Tibetan textbooks and editors of Tibetan texts will consider the possible benefit to their students, and the greater intellectual honesty, of implementing this or some similar policy.

Beyond instructing students in Tibetan grammar, Sommerschuh helps them to find their bearings as budding Tibetologists. This includes excellent advice about how to approach a Tibetan sentence (p. 108) and discussion of how to effectively use available resources. In particular she makes detailed reference to using the verb tables of the *Bod Rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Zhang 1985) and the database of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center <www.tbrc.org>. There is, however, a danger in citing web pages: the erstwhile Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library (p. 7) has now shed the appellation ‘Digital’ and moved its homepage to <www.thlib.org>. Sommerschuh has created a homepage of her own <www.tibetischesprache.de>, which includes a detailed errata list¹ and keys to the exercises. The final chapter, which discusses the structure of Tibetan texts, is also a useful feature. It is clear that Sommerschuh’s textbook has benefited from use in her classroom. Students will no doubt be grateful for her effort. Despite all of the improvements over the competition in pedagogical excellence, on balance Sommerschuh’s volume contains fewer readings and exercises than would be ideal in a first year textbook and is still weighed down by grammatical description.

¹) I notice only two small mistakes not covered by the errata. ‘Per Soensen’ should read ‘Per Sørensen’ (p. 251 n. 1), and *phywa* ‘Omen, Glück’ (p. 30) should either read *phya* ‘luck, fortune’ or *phywa* ‘a kind of deity’.

Merits as a Grammar

Sommerschuh's pedagogical acumen is *grosso modo* matched by her ability to precisely and accurately describe Tibetan grammar. She avoids many of the errors of her predecessors. She correctly analyses *-dan* as a case marker (p. 107).² She explicitly discusses ergativity (pp. 1, 101–102).³ She correctly states that the imperative is not itself negated, but that instead one uses the negation *ma* with the present stem (p. 139).⁴ Other areas of improvement over her predecessors include a very nice discussion of direct and indirect speech (p. 184), a helpful description of *zer* and *byas* to consistently mark off the speech of different participants in a conversation (p. 187), and of *-bcas* to mark the end of lists (p. 198).

Sommerschuh gives real examples which are appropriately cited. This obvious practice is a relatively recent innovation in Tibetan textbooks and grammars: neither Beyer (1992), Hahn (1994), or Hodge (1990) cite examples. She selects these examples so judiciously that they are neither too long, too technical, or too difficult, like those found in the reference grammars of Gyurmé (1992), or Schwieger (2006). In those cases where an example employs grammar not already introduced to the student, Sommerschuh adds a brief note of explanation (e.g. pp. 93, 96, 132, etc.)

Another improvement on her predecessors is the judicious but unobtrusive citation of more specialized literature (e.g. pp. 44 n. 2, 150 n. 1). At times, however, the work she chooses to cite is odd; rather than cite the *locus classicus* for the study of a particular phenomenon she cites a derivative work. Uray Géza suffers particularly badly. On the diminutive suffix *-bu* (p. 62) she cites Gyurmé (1992: 136) rather than Uray (1952); on reduplication with the suffix *-e* (p. 63) she incorrectly cites Beyer

² The indigenous Tibetan grammatical tradition does not treat *-dan* as a case marker; cf. Bacot (1946: 39) for a discussion of *-dan* under the heading 'particules non casuelles', and the discussion in Tournadre and Dorje (2003: 416 n. 183). Hodge (1990) appears to be entirely ignorant of the notion of nominal case marking. Beyer muddles his discussion of case by phrasing it in terms of 'semantic roles' but appears to treat *-dan* like the other case markers (1992: 270–271). Hahn correctly describes *-dan* as a case marker (1994: 31 n. 3, 72–74).

³ Hodge (1990) and Hahn (1994) fail to discuss ergativity. Beyer includes mention of ergativity (1992: 259–260).

⁴ Beyer (1992: 242–243), Hodge (1990: 42), and Hahn (1994: 83) mistakenly claim that the imperative stem is negated with *ma*.

(1992: 131)⁵ rather than Uray (1954); on the intensive adjectival suffix *-e* (p. 63) she cites Hahn (1994: 189)⁶ rather than Uray (1953). Discussing the difference between the plural suffixes *-dag* and *-rnams* (p. 84), she fails to cite Hahn (1978). The lack of a bibliography, which would outline the consulted literature *in toto* is a minor drawback of the work.

Despite its areas of progress, her work continues to suffer many of the same disadvantages as other textbooks. Most problematic is confusion about which language is being treated. In addition, several points of grammar are insufficiently elaborated or inaccurately described. Areas which could be improved include the felicity of some of the terminology chosen, the understanding of the structure of Tibetan alphabetical order, the description of the morphology and semantics of the Classical Tibetan verbal system, and the treatment of syntax.

The Confusion of Historical Periods

As the title's 'die tibetische Schriftsprache' suggests, Sommerschuh is unsure of what language she has written a textbook of. Her examples range from Dunhuang documents (p. 84) to Modern Standard Tibetan (p. 133). Perhaps one can argue that little harm is done by such a treatment when dealing with a conservative literary tradition. It is worth noting, however, that in a first year Greek course students generally concentrate on Plato; their readings do not range from Mycenaean tablets to the poems of Constantine Cavafy. A first year Classical Chinese course emphasises the 孟子 *Mengzi*, 論語 *Lunyu* and other Warring States or early Han texts, it does not survey texts from oracle bone inscriptions to the 紅樓夢 *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Should Tibetologists not take a cue from the traditions of teaching in these other languages with conservative literary traditions and pick a coherent and homogeneous body of Classical Tibetan texts to train students? Hahn (1994) does this in his book, with the disadvantage that his texts are all translations from Sanskrit and reveal some Sanskrit features. The *Mi las ras paḥi rnams thar* by Gtsaṅ smyon he ru ka rus paḥi rgyan can (1452–1507, cf. de Jong 1959), from which Sommerschuh draws many examples and some readings, is a good choice, but this should have been

⁵) In the passages she cites Beyer discusses the intensive adjectival suffix *-e*, and not reduplication. He bases his discussion transparently on Uray (1953).

⁶) Sommerschuh in fact cites page 173 of the 1985 edition, but only the 1994 edition is available to me.

supplemented with a work like the *Rgyal rabs gsal baḥi me lon* by Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375, cf. Kuznetsov 1966) rather than the autobiography of the 14th Dalai Lama.

The treatment of personal pronouns is one area where this confusion of historical periods is particularly disastrous. Sommerschuh presents the following chart as “die für die Schrift- und Umgangssprache wichtigsten Personalpronomen” (p. 87).

	Singular	Plural
1. Person	<i>na</i> ich	<i>na-tsho</i> wir
2. Person	<i>khyed-rañ</i> du/Sie	<i>khyed-rañ-tsho</i> ihr/Sie
3. Person	<i>khoñ</i> er/sie	<i>khoñ-tsho</i> sie

This is a correct account of the personal pronouns in Modern Standard Tibetan (Tournadre and Dorje 2003: 92), but does not accurately reflect the system of personal pronouns in Classical Tibetan. The biography of Mi las ras pa uses the following system of pronouns (cf. Hill 2007).

	Singular	Plural
1st person	<i>na</i>	
1st + 2nd person		<i>rañ-re</i>
1st + 3rd person		<i>ñed</i>
2nd person	<i>khyod</i>	<i>khyed</i>
3rd person	<i>kho</i>	<i>khoñ</i>

Trying to force a single system of personal pronouns on all of Tibetan linguistic history, Sommerschuh is left with the awkward task of differentiating *na-tsho* from *ñed*. The words *na-tsho* and *ñed* are as different as ‘wir’ and ‘nous’; they are not from the same language. Sommerschuh incorrectly concludes that *ñed* is ‘elegant-bescheiden’ (p. 88), but quite understandably unsatisfied with this description includes a lengthy footnote (p. 88 n. 3) which demonstrates only that Beyer (1992: 208), Francke,⁷ and Bray (1999: 72) understand the meaning of *ñed* no better than she. Ironically, in this same footnote she correctly translates a passage from the Mi las ras pa biography, which, by switching from the first person plural exclusive to the first person singular, reflects the correct analysis:

⁷ Bray cites archival sources which I have been unable to confirm at first hand. Francke presents similar remarks in an article (1907).

*nied-gñis-kyis gros byas-nas / nias phyé sgye chun-du ma cig-gi khar dpe-cha-dan
chas phran tshogs yod-pa sbrags-te*

Nachdem wir beraten hatten, lud ich [meine] Bücher und Habseligkeiten auf
einige kleine Tsampasäcke (p. 88 n. 3 cf. Mila, de Jong 1959: 65 l. 14–15)

The failure to correctly distinguish languages has other predicable consequences. The case suffix *-r* is treated as an allomorph of *-la*, which it is in Modern Standard Tibetan but not in Classical Tibetan. With no special notice various words, such as *deb* ‘(codex format) book’ (p. 50) and *slob-grwa-chen-mo* ‘university’ (p. 53), are included which will never be found outside of modern Tibetan. The copula verb *red* (p. 43) is treated, but copulas that are much more frequent in Classical Tibetan, such as *mchis* and *gdah*, receive no mention. While the overall tendency is to overemphasize grammar peculiar to Modern Standard Tibetan at the expense of Classical, there are also cases of the reverse. For instance, she says that the verb *mjal* ‘to meet’ governs the associative case (p. 120); this is true for Classical, but in Modern Standard Tibetan the verb governs the absolutive (Tournadre and Dorje 2003: 140).

Even when Sommerschuh does draw a clear line between Classical Tibetan and Modern Standard Tibetan, her description of the modern language does more harm than good (pp. 256–258). In particular, person is not a relevant category in the Modern Standard Tibetan verbal system; evidential mood is what dictates the choice of auxiliary. Remarkably, for a more in depth discussion Sommerschuh cites Tournadre and Dorje (2003). Throughout his career Tournadre has argued for evidential modal categories as opposed to person categories.

Felicity of Terminology

Personal preference plays a role in choosing terminology and no two researchers will probably agree entirely on questions of terminology. Nonetheless, certain practices found in this work, frequent in the description of Tibetan, are undesirable.

Referring to all Tibetan morphemes apart from nominal and verbal stems as ‘particles’ is a hoary tradition (Foucaux 1858,⁸ Das 1915, Lalou 1950, Hahn 1994, Hodge 1990). Sommerschuh follows this practice.

⁸) In fact Foucaux fares rather better than others; he only refers to nominal suffixes, converbs, and sentence adverbs as ‘particles’ (1858: 14–20). Jäschke wisely (1883) avoids the term ‘particle’.

Grouping together case markers, verbal suffixes, adverbs, and lexical derivatives into one class in English would result in a meaningless grab bag of ‘in’, ‘-ing’, ‘however’, ‘-ness’, ‘-ed’. The precision of terms such as ‘case marker’ or ‘nominal suffix’ is much more useful and accurate. In the study of Greek or German it is only sentence adverbs such as γάρ or *doch* which are dubbed ‘particles’. Following this practice in Tibetan would yield a small group including *ni* and *han*; better still is to call these ‘sentence adverbs’ and be rid of the term ‘particle’ altogether.

Sommerschuh uses hyphenated names for some of the cases: ‘Ergativ-Instrumentalsuffix’, ‘Dativ-Lokativsuffix’ (p. 107). Such terminology suggests that these cases do not exist in their own right, but rather consist of combinations of more basic components. The opposite is true: the case marked with *-kyis* and the case marked with *-la* are structural components of Tibetan; how one chooses to analyze the semantics of these cases is a matter of taste. The Greek dative combines the functions which in Sanskrit are covered by the dative, instrumental, and locative. The Sanskrit instrumental combines the functions which in Finnish are covered by instructive (instrument of means) and comitative (instrument of accompaniment). It would be silly to call the Greek dative the ‘dative-instructive-comitative-locative’. To do so would be to confuse a case with its use, and to describe one language by implicitly comparing it to others rather than by accepting the language on its own terms. I prefer to label the Tibetan cases thus: (1) absolutive *-Ø*, (2) genitive *-kyi*, *-gyi*, *-gi*, *-hi*, (3) agentive *-kyis*, *-gyis*, *-gyi*, *-s*, (4) allative *-la*, (5) locative *-na*, (6) terminative *-r* ~ *-ru*, *-su*, *-tu*, *-du*, (7) ablative *-las*, (8) elative *-nas*, (9) associative *-dan* (cf. Hill 2004: 79–84). However, any terminology which correctly distinguishes all nine cases without using hyphenated names would be equally appropriate.

The term ‘infinitive’ by its etymology contrasts with ‘finite’ verb forms. The latter are normally defined as verb forms that show personal agreement. Tibetan has no personal agreement. While the term ‘finite’ can probably be made sense of in Tibetan with a definition such as ‘a verb form which is capable of ending a discourse’, I see no reason for labelling any of the many non-finite verb forms in Tibetan ‘infinitive’. Sommerschuh’s definition of the infinitive as “die Form, in der Man ein Verb gewöhnlich nennt” (p. 56), which she uses to define both the Tibetan and German infinitive, leads to the very odd (and false) conclusions that in Greek the first person singular present indicative is the infinitive, and that in Sanskrit the verbal root is the infinitive. It is much less confusing to speak of the ‘citation form’

of a verb. Just because the infinitive is the citation form of the verb in German does not mean the citation form in Tibetan should be labelled ‘infinitive’.

In other domains Sommerschuh has been less traditional. She approaches syntax invoking the semantic roles (Satzglieder) of Charles Fillmore (pp. 103–106, cf. Fillmore 1968). She classifies the use of cases into core roles (Satzgliedmarkierende Funktionen) and peripheral ones (Adverbialbestimmung, e.g. cf. p. 145). While, so long as semantic roles remain fashionable in linguistics, this approach may be useful to students who follow their study of Tibetan with a linguistics course, I am not convinced of its utility for understanding Tibetan grammar.

Sommerschuh’s definition of ‘transitive’ (p. 109) is circular. It employs the Fillmorian semantic roles, which were themselves defined in relation to transitive verbs. I doubt whether it is useful to speak of transitive and intransitive verbs at all in Tibetan (cf. Hill 2004: 85–86). One result of forcing Tibetan verbs into the Procrustean bed of transitivity can be seen in Sommerschuh’s decision to call some bivalent verbs that govern the agentive ‘transitive’ and others ‘intransitive’ (p. 120). She does not explain how to distinguish transitive verbs with inanimate agents from intransitive verbs with an agentive complement.

Alphabet and Pronunciation

Sommerschuh believes as others do (e.g. Bacot 1946: 8–9, Schwieger 2006: 21–22) that the linguistic meaningfulness of Tibetan alphabetic order breaks down at *w-* (p. 13). In fact, originally there was no letter *w-* (Uray 1955), and the entire alphabet is arranged in a linguistically meaningful way. The absence of a nasal in the row with the affricates makes clear that from that point on the alphabet comes in rows of three rather than of four. Róna-Tas pointed this out in conjunction with his argument that the original value of the letter <ḥ> was [ɣ] (1966: 129 n. 142, cf. Hill 2009).

velars	ཀ k	ཁ kh	ག g	ང ṅ
palatals	ཅ c	ཆ ch	ཇ j	ཉ ṇ
dentals	ཏ t	ཐ th	ད d	ན n
labials	པ p	ཕ ph	བ b	མ m
dental affricates	ཅ ts	ཆ tsh	ཇ dz	

voiced fricatives	ཁ <i>ḥ</i>	ཟ <i>z</i>	ཨ <i>h</i>
glides	ཡ <i>y</i>	ར <i>r</i>	ལ <i>l</i>
voiceless fricatives	ཅ <i>ś</i>	ས <i>s</i>	ཧ <i>h</i>
null consonant	ཨ not transliterated		

The Classical Tibetan Verbal System

Sommerschuh presents a short schematic overview of Classical Tibetan verbal morphology (pp. 236–237); she takes no account of the relevant research in this domain (especially Li 1933, Coblin 1976, and Beckwith 1996), appearing to present a synoptic view of Hahn's presentation (1994: 207–219). An example of where this leads her astray is the description of aspiration as appearing and disappearing unpredictably across the paradigms of some verbs. In fact, aspiration correlates exactly with the presence of prefixes. Students will have already memorized the co-occurrence conditions of these prefixes with aspirates (pp. 32–33); there is no reason for them to keep track of these alternations.

Ablaut patterns and stem changes are also entirely accounted for as the by-product of prefixes and suffixes. For example, a prefix *g-* in the present causes a stem vowel *a* to become *o* (cf. Coblin 1976: 54–56). A prefix *h-* always induces an epenthetic dental stop before fricatives (*ś-*, *z-*, *s-*, *z-*), *l-*, and *r-* (cf. Li 1933: 149). Presenting ablaut patterns and stem changes as independent and arbitrary changes of the present stem to other stems makes the system opaque and unlearnable. In fact, once one knows which prefixes and suffixes are applied, all other changes in the verb stems are completely predictable.

Sommerschuh describes the semantic differences among the verb stems as differences of 'aspect' (pp. 137, 253). She does not defend this description, despite Bettina Zeisler's rather large book arguing that 'relative tense', and not 'aspect', is the category encoded by the verb stems (2004).⁹ In my own opinion the description of the semantics of the Tibetan verb in terms of 'aspect' is not so much wrong as meaningless. The term 'aspect' originally described the difference between verb pairs in Russian, such as *смотреть* and *посмотреть* (van Driem 2001: 649–655). Now it is used to describe a wide variety of different phenomena in different languages. If Sommer-

⁹ Sommerschuh does cite this book, but only for its table comparing various transliteration schemes (p. 7 n. 2)

Schuh believes it is important that students know that the semantics of verb stems encode ‘aspect’ she should discuss the matter at greater length and take account of Zeisler’s counterarguments.

Sommerschuh mentions the importance of control in determining the auxiliary verbs in Modern Standard Tibetan (p. 133). However, in her discussion of the auxiliaries *hgyur* and *byed* in Classical Tibetan (pp. 247–252), she appears unaware of the detailed argument Claus Oetke makes that *hgyur* only accompanies non-control verbs and *byed* only control verbs (1977: 373–410).

Syntax

Syntax is the topic most cursorily covered in Tibetan grammars and textbooks, and Sommerschuh’s work is no exception. She discusses ellipsis (p. 126) as if it were governed by no rules or patterns. This unfortunately shows that Paul Kent Andersen’s hope that his essay on ellipsis in Classical Tibetan “be of some use to the Tibetan scholar” (1987: 307) to have been in vain. Taking much of the mystery out of ‘supplying from context’, Andersen shows that the omission of arguments is governed by strict rules. In particular, Andersen demonstrates that a verb followed by *-pa-dan* or the indicative morpheme *-ho* blocks the omission of arguments in neighbouring clauses. If others were to follow up Andersen’s work, his approach would likely also shed light on *-ste*, *-cin*, and other converbial morphemes. Despite Sommerschuh’s detailed discussion, I remain unsatisfied that all of these verbal suffixes appear to mean ‘and’, ‘but’, and ‘then’ according to context.

While it certainly seems that *ni* can suppress a case marker (p. 173), just as *wa* in Japanese can suppress *ga*, it is not at all the case that nouns before *ni* are always in the absolutive (cf. Hill 2004: 92–94). The conditions under which *ni* suppresses case marking deserves more attention. Sommerschuh herself has an example of *bas ni* (p. 175) and an example of the ergative plus *ni* (p. 182). Despite these inadequacies in the treatment of syntax, with an excellent coverage of verbal rection (pp. 108–122) Sommerschuh’s volume makes a definite improvement on available textbooks.

Conclusion

I do not hesitate to say that Sommerschuh has written the best textbook yet available for Classical Tibetan. Unfortunately, this is not as much of a compliment as it may sound. Although this review has pointed out a

number of areas where Sommerschuh's manual might be improved both in fact and in presentation, I would like to emphasize that the bulk of these criticisms could be made of all Tibetan textbooks. Sommerschuh's work represents a certain step in the right direction.

In addition to being a fine contribution to scholarship and pedagogy, the book is physically of high quality; it is hard bound, appears to be sewn, and includes a ribbon bookmark. Books on demand seem to have come of age. This technology has allowed the book to already be in its second edition. One can only hope that, with the very small print runs and ease of updating that such technology enables, the learned public can look forward to an ever improving textbook in Sommerschuh's competent hands.

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